

Select Overview of Poverty in Boston and
Three Neighborhoods:
Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan

Presentation to
Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP)
Boston Medical Center

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Presentation

➤ Data sources

➤ 8 key findings

➤ Conclusion: 3 thought questions...**for you (!)**

Data Sources

- 2010 decennial census
- Current Population Survey, *Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement*
- American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates
- Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS)
- *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2018*, Current Population Reports (September 2019)

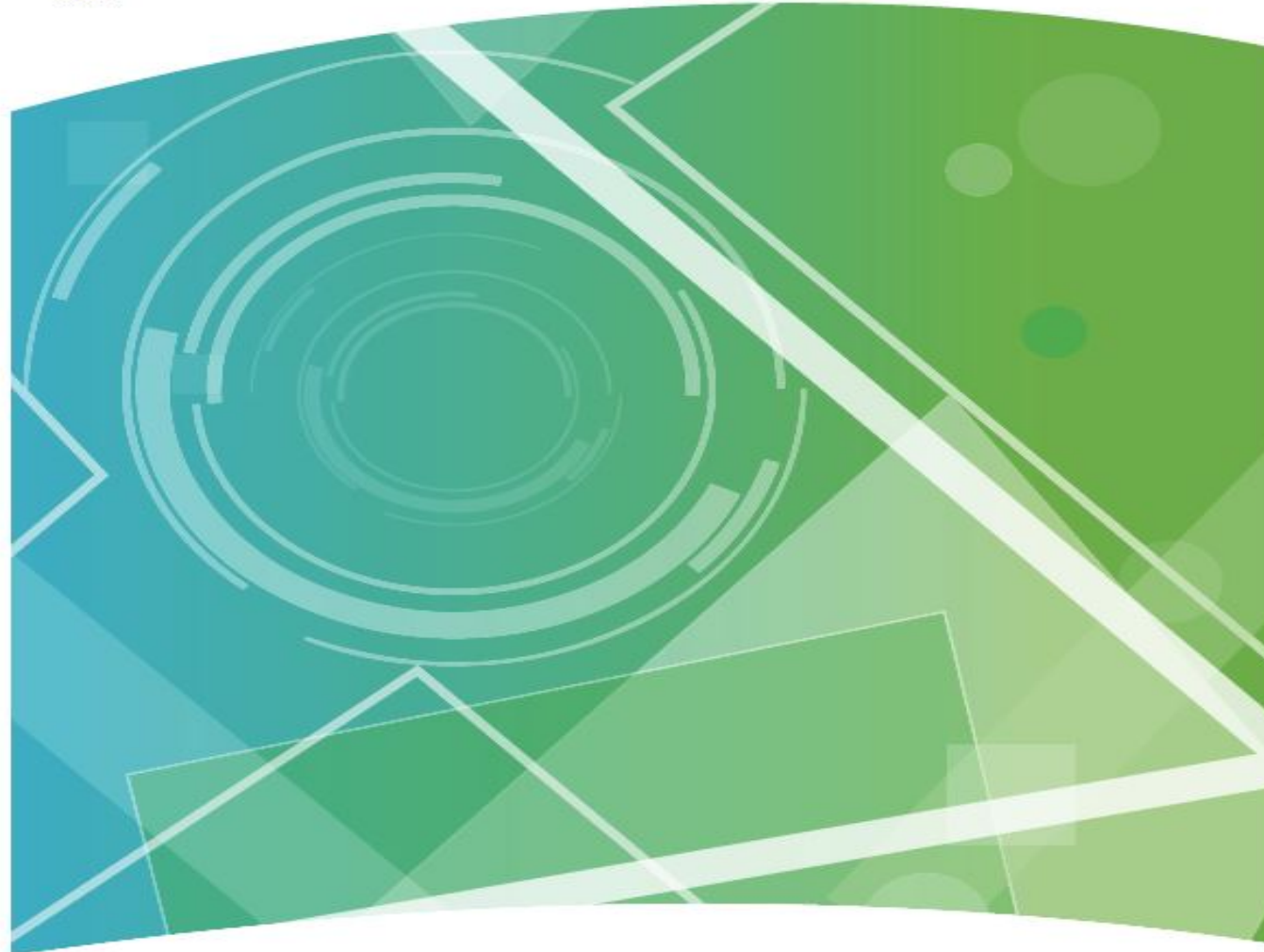
Income and Poverty in the United States: 2018

Current Population Reports

By Jessica Semega, Melissa Kollar, John Creamer, and Abinash Mohanty

Issued September 2019

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“Income” measure of poverty...

Poverty thresholds are used to show the number of persons and families living in poverty.

2019

1- person family size, \$12,490

2- person family, \$16,901

3- person family size, \$21,330

4- person family size, \$25,750

5- person family size, \$30,170

6- person family size, \$34,590

7- person family size, \$39,010

8- person family size, \$43,430

<https://www.masslegalservices.org/content/federal-poverty-guidelines-2019>

<https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>

The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2018

Current Population Reports

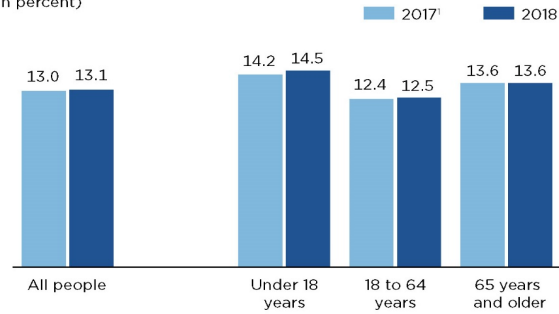
Liana Fox
P60-268
September 2019

INTRODUCTION

Since the publication of the first official U.S. poverty estimates, researchers and policy-makers have continued to discuss the best approach to measure income and poverty in the United States. Beginning in 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau began publishing the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM), which extends the official poverty measure by taking account of many of the government programs designed to assist low-income families and individuals that are not included in the official poverty measure.

This is the ninth report describing the SPM, released by the Census Bureau, with support from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). This report presents updated estimates of the prevalence of poverty in the United States using the official measure and the SPM based on information collected in 2019 and earlier Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplements (CPS ASEC).

Figure 1.
Supplemental Poverty Measure Rates for Total Population and by Age Group: 2017 and 2018
(In percent)



¹ The 2017 data reflect the implementation of an updated processing system. For more details, see appendix.
Note: For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see <<https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar19.pdf>>.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2018-2019 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2018, the overall SPM rate was 13.1 percent. This is not statistically different from the 2017 SPM rate of 13.0 (Figure 1).
- SPM rates were not statistically different for any of the

major age categories in 2018 compared with 2017. SPM rates for children under the age of 18 were 14.5 percent, which is not significantly different than 14.2 percent in 2017 (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

(!)...a more comprehensive, historical approach to **'overall'** poverty:

- *lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods;*
- *hunger and malnutrition;*
- *ill health; increased mortality from illness;*
- *limited or lack of access to education and other basic services;*
- *homelessness and inadequate housing;*
- *unsafe environments*
- *social discrimination and exclusion*
- ***lack of participation in decision making in civil, social and cultural life***

See: World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995, 117 countries adopted a declaration and program of action which included commitments to eradicate “absolute” and reduce “overall” poverty.

8 Key Findings

1) Boston's overall poverty rate remains **high**, at 20.5% or one fifth of its estimated population of 626,118 persons

Note: The overall **poverty rate has not changed substantively** over the last few years

RACE AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN	Total	Below poverty level	Percent below poverty level
	626,118	128,618	20.5%
White alone	323,795	47,201	14.6%
Black or African American alone	165,302	39,639	24.0%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	2,406	579	24.1%
Asian alone	56,680	17,657	31.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	149	18	12.1%
Some other race alone	46,294	15,673	33.9%
Two or more races	31,492	7,851	24.9%
Hispanic or Latinx origin (of any race)	124,615	39,035	31.3%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	273,935	33,359	12.2%

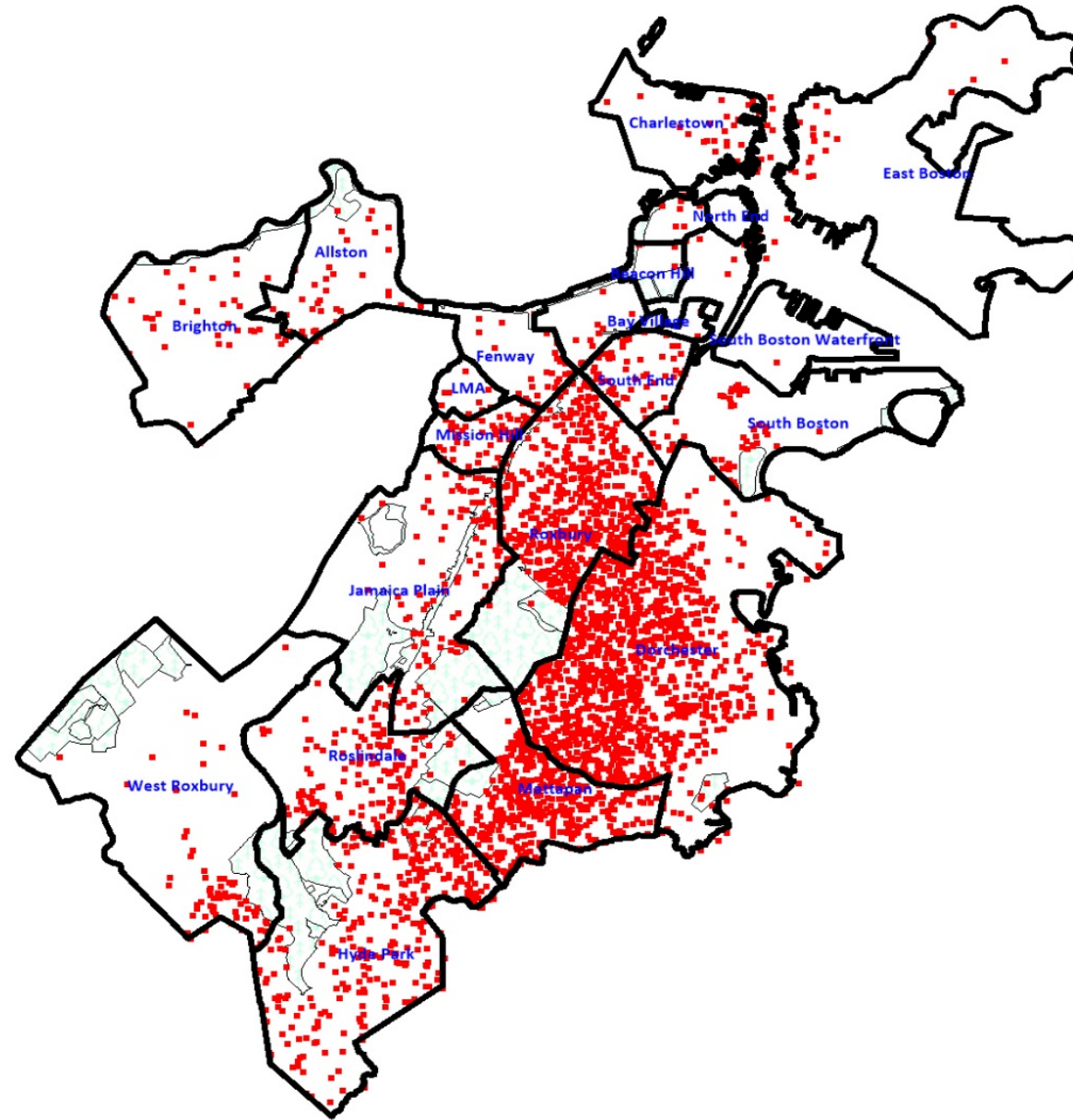
Source: ACS 13-17, American Fact Finder S1701: POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

	Total Households	Receipt SNAP	
Black	58944	19044	32.3%
Latino	42705	16428	38.5%
Asian	23225	5213	22.4%
White Non Latinx	135746	9901	7.3%

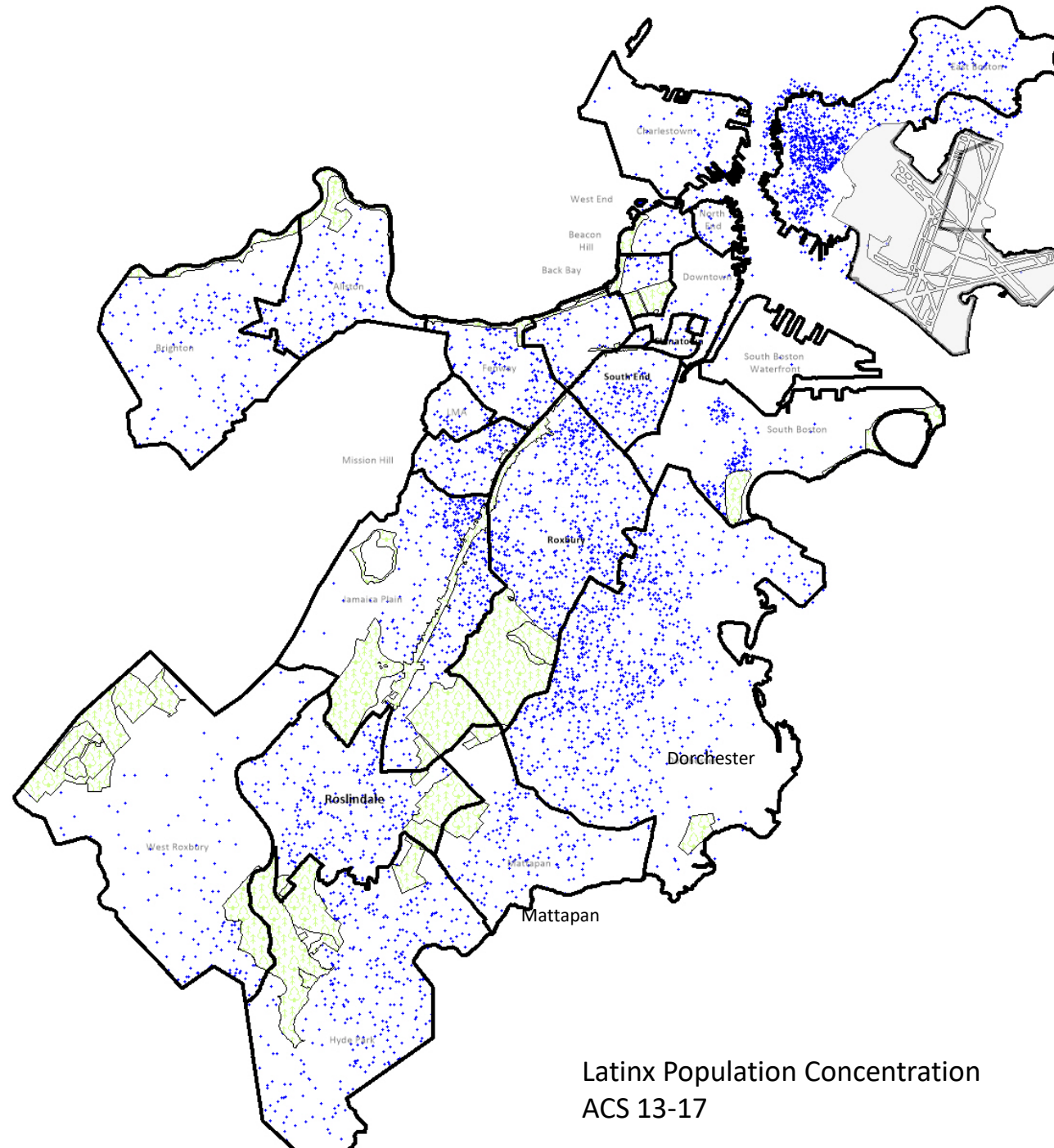
Source: ACS 2013 - 2017

2) In Boston, poverty has a *racial/ethnic* and *spatial* face

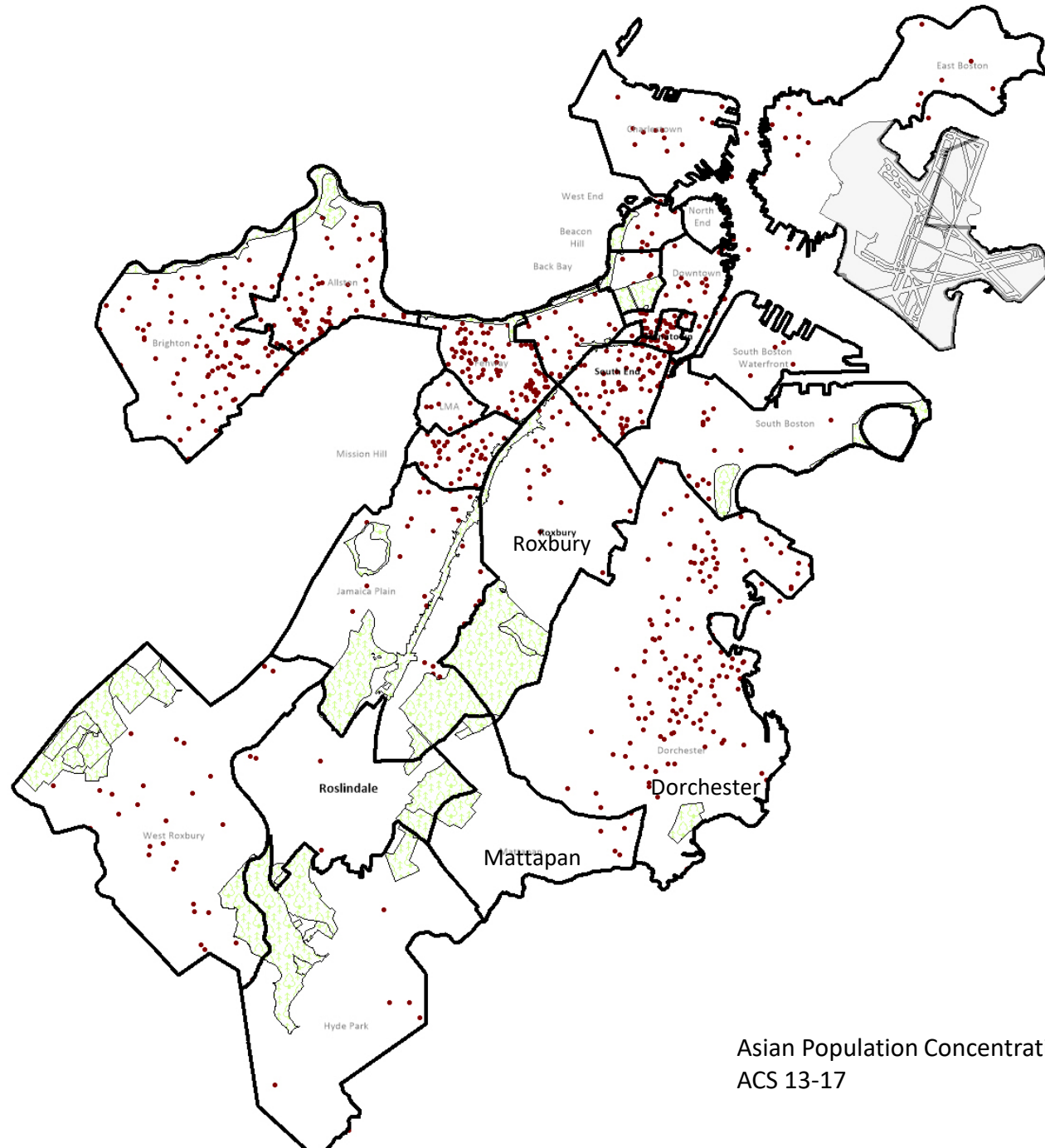
- major continuing and persistent differences in poverty rates by race and ethnicity, *and location* in Boston



ACS 2013 - 2017



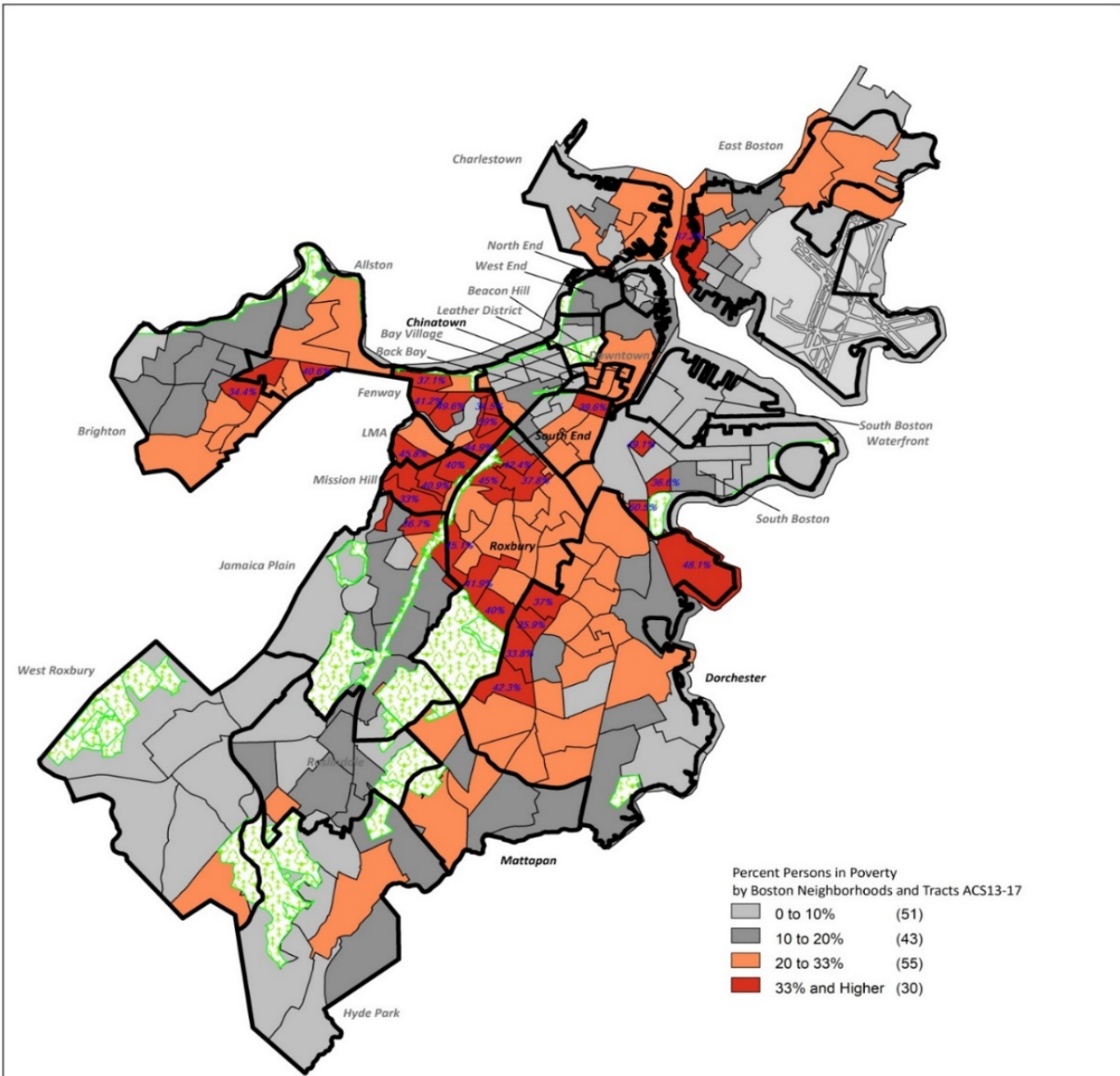
Latinx Population Concentration
ACS 13-17



Asian Population Concentration
ACS 13-17

	Roxbury		Mattapan		Dorchester		Boston	
Total Persons	49,488		25,148		125,342		625,633	
Inc Below Poverty	16,758	33.9%	5,199	20.7%	29,905	23.9%	128,602	20.6%

Source: ACS 2013 - 2017

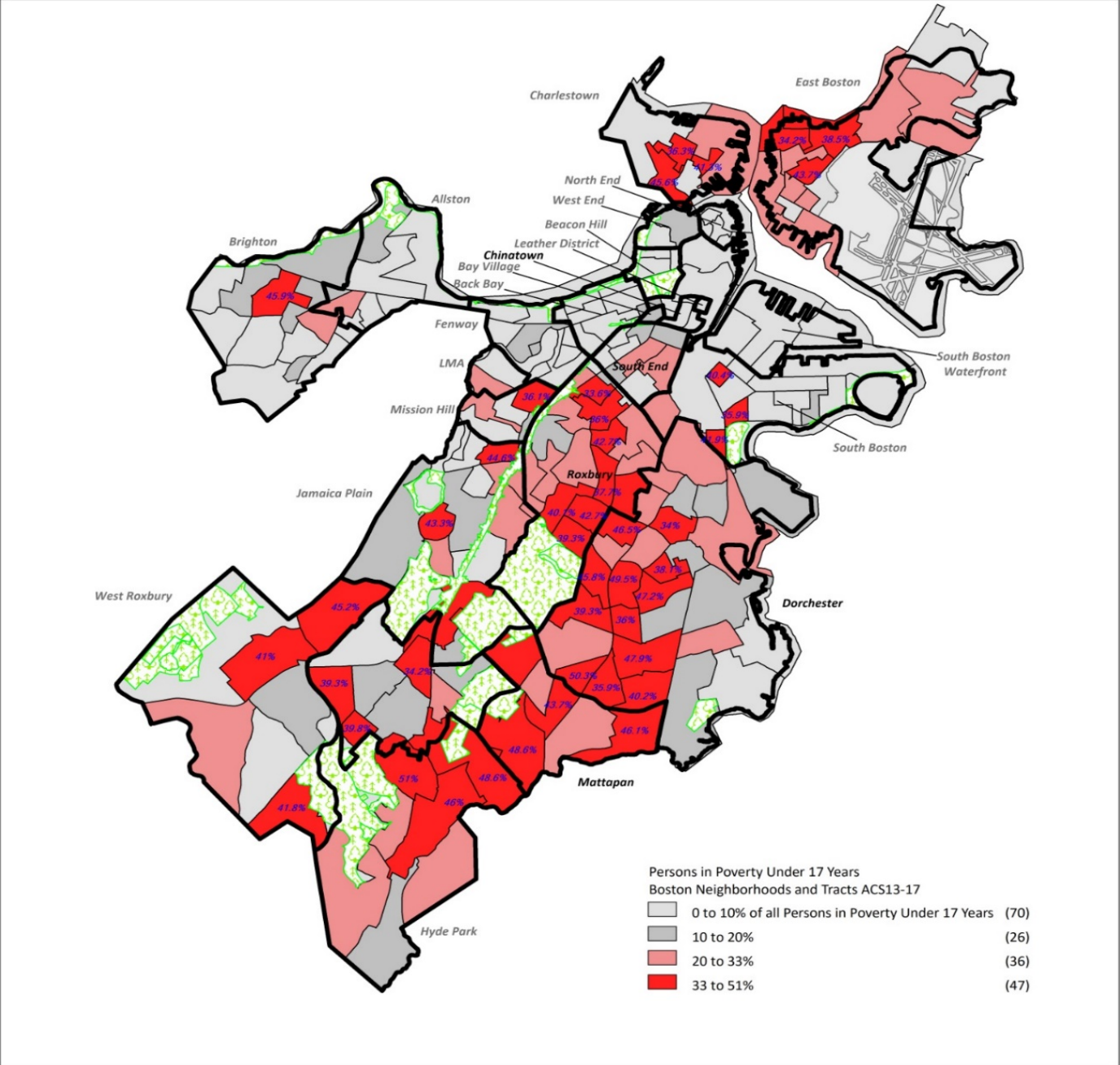


3) Poverty population is demographically-diverse: elderly; single parents (and married couples); persons with disabilities; unemployed and low-wage workers (full and part-time workers; children, *but...*

Children and youth in predominantly Black and Latino areas reflect very high poverty rates and represent a major component of who is impoverished in these places, and in Boston-

Composition of Poverty Persons by Age	Roxbury		Mattapan		Dorchester		Boston	
Under 6 Years	2,277	13.6%	803	15.4%	3,185	10.7%	11,167	8.7%
6 to 17 Years	3,267	19.5%	1,319	25.4%	6,544	21.9%	20,794	16.2%
18 to 59 Years	8,477	50.6%	2,531	48.7%	16,305	54.5%	76,902	59.8%
60 to 84 Years	2,602	15.5%	532	10.2%	3,621	12.1%	17,490	13.6%
85 Years and Over	135	0.8%	14	0.3%	250	0.8%	2,249	1.7%

Source: ACS 2013 - 2017



4) Along with greater levels of poverty for many residents in the three neighborhoods, racialized *and spatialized* inequality in the form of homeownership rates, median income levels, and unemployment is significant;

Median Income (ACS 11-15)

Whites, Non Latinx:	\$79,802
Blacks:	\$38,454
Asians:	\$38,802
Latinx:	\$30,883

Women Unemployment Rate (ACS 13-17)

White women, Not Latinx:	3.8%
Black women:	9.9%
Asian women:	7.3%
Latinas:	10.2%

Per Capita Income (ACS 11-15)

Whites, Non Latinx:	\$53,147
Blacks:	\$20,584
Asians:	\$26,587
Latinx:	\$17,787

Homeownership (ACS 11-15)

White HH, Not Latinx:	43.7%
Black HH:	28.5%
Asian HH:	25.1%
Latinx HH:	16.6%

5) While higher employment rates and education attainment are associated with lower levels of poverty, the return for such is much lower for Blacks and Latinos;

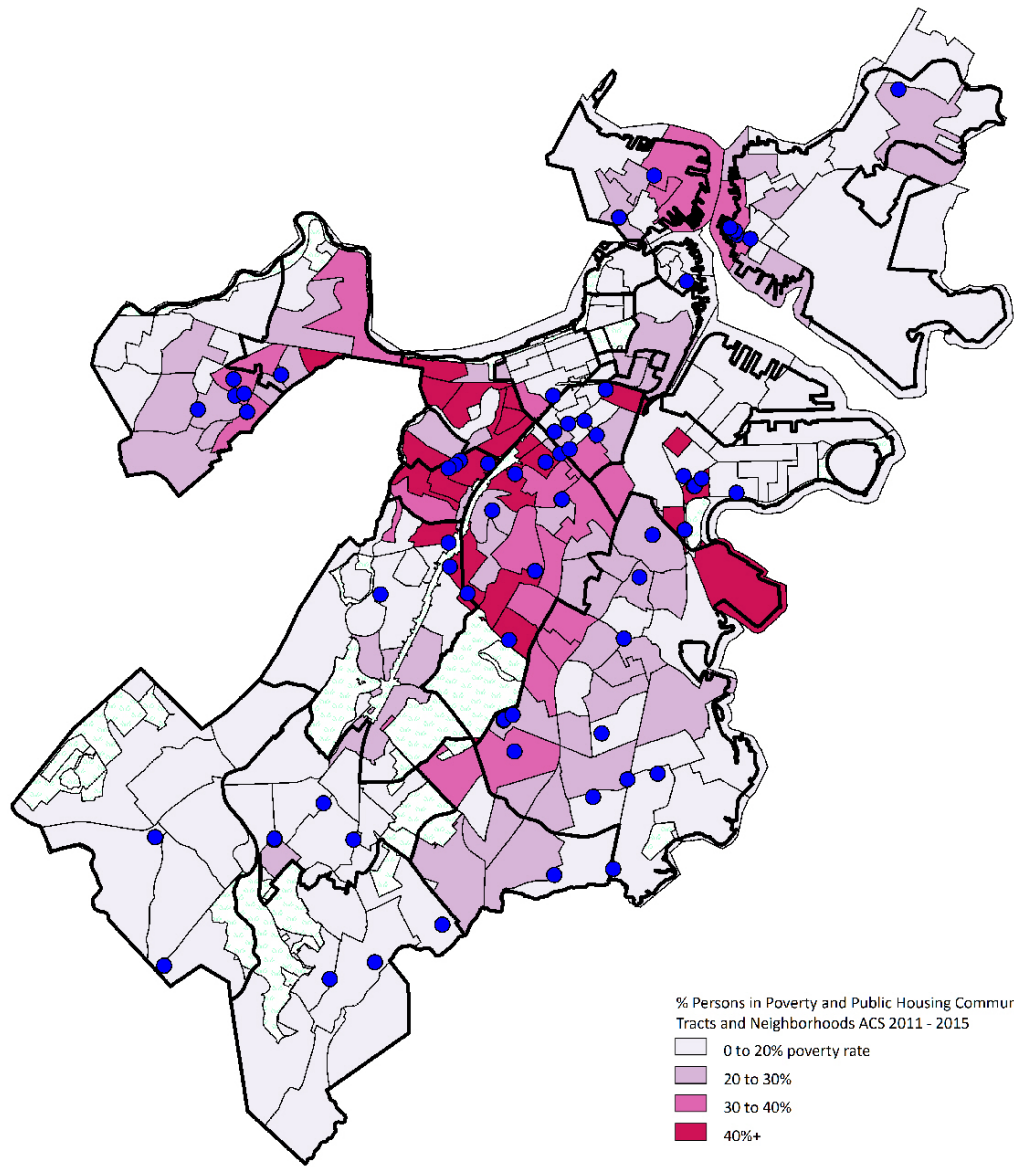
-Average wages for youth at 24 Years (PUMS 13-17)

Whites: \$31,000
Blacks: \$19,000
Asians: \$13,000
Latinx: \$19,000

-Average wages for Latinx Persons with a HS Diploma: \$21,000
Average wages for Non-Latinx Persons with a HS Diploma: \$26,000

NOTE: Gap of \$5,000 increases to a gap of \$18,000 for the same two groupings with a BA degree.

6) Public housing is not the culprit in explaining continuing and persistent poverty



% Persons in Poverty and Public Housing Communities
Tracts and Neighborhoods ACS 2011 - 2015

- 0 to 20% poverty rate
- 20 to 30%
- 30 to 40%
- 40%+

7) Local poverty is conjoined with *considerable* local social and economic resources

...while the median income of households in Roxbury was only \$28,455 (estimated in 2017), the aggregate effective buying income was \$828,988,527

...in Roxbury and Mattapan, single-headed family households contribute the greatest to the amount of total personal disposable income

...in 2014, *InfoUSA / Applied Geographic Solutions* counted 1,715 businesses with employees in Roxbury, another 506 in Mattapan; in Roxbury, 64% of these businesses employed between 1 and 4 employees, and 17% employed between 5 and 9 employees

...community-based organizations; faith-based organizations; community actors

...land (!)

8) Poverty **does not negate nor should obscure significant resources and resilience** associated with people who are living with incomes under official poverty thresholds, or their communities.

Studying, analyzing, debating poverty should not minimize historical and ongoing struggles on the part of people living in communities and neighborhoods with low incomes or living under poverty thresholds.

- Robert C. Hayden's forewarning is most relevant today: "An overview of Boston's early black community portrayed with only economic statistics is incomplete...because it overlooks the response of poor people to their conditions"

"A Historical Overview of Poverty among Blacks in Boston, 1950-1990"
Trotter Review, vol. 17, no.1 (2007), p.132

- Michael Liu, et al., *The Snake Dance of Asian American Activism* (2008)

- Russell Lopez, *Boston's South End: The Clash of Ideas in a Historic Neighborhood*(2015)

- Melvin B. Miller, *Boston's Banner Years 1965-2015, A Saga of Black Success* (2018)

3 Thought Questions for You...

- What kinds of anti-poverty strategies and policies, or initiatives, might be most effective in a context of major economic growth and incredible concentration of wealth?
- What is the relationship between politics, power and continuing high levels of poverty?
- How can all residents, but especially those in communities where the challenge of poverty is much higher than other places, become better organized to change this continuing situation?

END

George Bernard Shaw (1928)

“Such poverty as we have today in all our great cities degrades the poor, and infects with its degradation the whole neighborhood in which they live. And whatever can degrade a neighborhood can degrade a country and a continent and finally the whole civilized world, which is only a large neighborhood. Its bad effects cannot be escaped by the rich. When poverty produces outbreaks of virulent infectious disease, as it always does sooner or later, the rich catch the disease and see their children die of it. When it produces crime and violence the rich go in fear of both, and put to a good deal of expense to protect their persons and property. When it produces bad manners and bad language the children of the rich pick them up no matter how carefully they are secluded; and such seclusion as they get does them more harm than good...The old notion that people can ‘keep themselves to themselves’ and not be touched by what is happening to their neighbors, or even to the people who live a hundred miles off, is a most dangerous mistake. **The saying that we are members one of another is not a mere pious formula to be repeated in church and without any meaning: it is a literal truth; for though the rich end of the town can avoid living with the poor end, it cannot avoid dying with it when the plague comes.**”

Orshansky Index

- Mollie Orshansky established this approach for Department of Agriculture in 1963
- Adopted by Council of Economic Advisors in 1964
- Remains basic model for measuring poverty today

Step 1: U.S. Dept of Agriculture assumed that a 4 person, non-farm, family consumed approximately one third (1/3) of its annual income on food. This was based on a 1955 survey of food consumption

Step 2: U.S. Dept of Agriculture determined the income required to purchase food under an “Economy Food Plan”

Step 3: The income required to purchase food under the “Economy Food Plan” was simply multiplied by “3” due to the finding in Step 1.

Note: federal adjustments are made for family size and inflation; but, *not* for differences in cost of food, or regions and states.

J. Jennings, Understanding the Nature of Poverty in Urban America (Praeger, 1994)